

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 2, 4-5, and 7-16 are pending, claims 3 and 6 having been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer, by this Amendment, but claims 7-16 have been withdrawn from consideration.

Pursuant to the requirement of the Examiner, Applicants hereby affirm the election of the alleged invention of Group I, claims 1-6. With regard to whether or not the election was made with traverse, and, if made with traverse, the ground(s) of such traversal, the undersigned cannot presently determine this, and Robert C. Faber, who made the provisional election by telephone referred to in the Office Action, is presently out of the office. Investigation is under way to determine whether or not a traversal was made, and if made, the ground(s) thereof, and if further information become available, it will be submitted in writing.

Claim 5 was objected to for the informality that “grandules” in line 4 of the claim, as it appeared in the Preliminary Amendment filed in the above-captioned application and dated September 1, 2006, (hereinafter “the Preliminary Amendment”), was assumed to be “granules.” Reconsideration of the objection is respectfully requested.

Claim 5 has been amended to eliminate the word “grandules.”

Claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 5 has been amended to replace the phrase “which is desirable for further processing of the grandules,” appearing on lines 3-4 of the claim as it appeared in the Preliminary Amendment, with “--of up to 8 mm--”. Antecedent basis for the amendment is found in the specification as originally filed, for example, on page 7, lines 11-18.

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Komatsu et al., JP 60052533 A. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 3-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Komatsu et al. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate therein the features of former dependent claims 3 and 6 and, therefore, former dependent claims 3 and 6 have been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer.

Furthermore, independent claim 1 has been amended to provide that, “at least some of the returned sintered material” is added “within a longitudinal extent of a granulation drum during the granulation process.” Antecedent basis for this further amendment to independent claim 1 is found in

the originally filed specification, for example, on page 3, lines 17-19, on page 9, lines 25-29, and on page 10, lines 1-5, and in the drawings, for example, in Figs. 2 and 3.

The Derwent abstract of Komatsu et al. enclosed with the Office Action indicates that the “mixed material is mixed with returned ore at the inlet side of a sec. mixer,” (Basic-Abstract, lines 4-5). The Examiner appears to agree with the Derwent abstract in stating that “Komatsu teaches that the returned ore (as stated above) is mixed with the premixed ore, addition, and binder at the inlet side of a second mixer, where granulation takes place. The fact that the mixture takes place at the inlet side of the second mixer allows the mixture to take place right before or sometime during granulation,” (Office Action, page 4, third paragraph, lines 2-6; emphasis supplied). In contrast, independent claim 1 provides for “adding at least some of the returned sintered material within a longitudinal extent of a granulation drum during the granulation process,” (emphasis supplied).

Thus, Komatsu et al. does not appear to teach, suggest, or disclose any addition of return sintered material within the longitudinal extent of a granulation drum, as claimed in independent claim 1 and, therefore, in dependent claims 2 and 4-5.

Applicants enclose herewith a copy of an English language abstract of Komatsu et al. from the esp@cenet database for the Examiner’s information and reference.

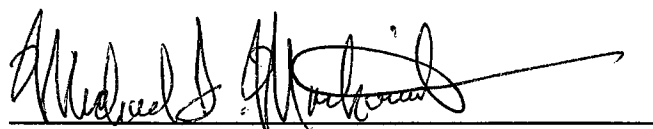
With regard to the Examiner’s statement in support of the rejection of claim 6 that “‘intensive mixing’ would be subject to process specifications,” (Office Action, page 5, lines 1-2), Applicants are uncertain regarding how this statement supports the rejection of claim 6, the features of which are now incorporated into claim 1, and respectfully request the Examiner to provide an explanation so that Applicants can determine whether to respond and how to respond if a response is determined to be needed.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, allowance of claims 1, 2, and 4-5 is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,



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